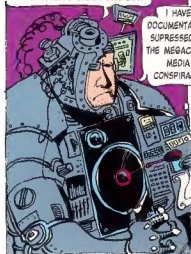




STRATOSPHERE IS ONE OF THREE BIOMECH CONSTRUCTS LEFT HERE BY THE SHYAR TO UNDERMINE EARTH STABILITY.

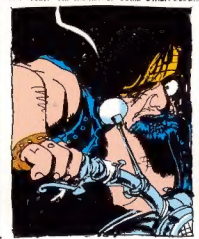


MR. STRATOSPHERE REFUSED MY COMPANY'S GENEROUS OFFER OF EMPLOYMENT IN OUR INTELLIGENCE GATHERING DIVISION.



YEAH, ME AND DUKE GO WAAAAAY BACK. HE SAVED MY BUTT IN THE '93 JERSEY SHORE CONFLAG.

NO. WAIT. I'M THINKIN' OF SOME OTHER DUDE...



AM, YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME WITH THOSE KNOW-NOTHINGS.

IF YOU WANT THE REAL DIRT, YOU GOTTA TALK TO THE ONLY CAT WHO CAN TELL YOU...



EVERYTHING YOU EVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT

# DUKE STRATOSPHERE

BUT WERE AFRAID  
TO ASK!

AS EXPLAINED BY THAT SULTAN OF SCOOP, THAT  
LORD OF LOW DOWN, THE GURU OF GOSSIP

**MR. BONGO!**

THAT'S ME!

BY  
**JOHN MOORE**  
AND  
**KYLE BAKER**

A STAN LEE PRESENTATION

YES, I, MR. BONGO, WILL NOW DISPEL THE MYTHS AND MISINFORMATION SURROUNDING THE DUKE...

...AND REVEAL TO YOU THE TRUE CIRCUMSTANCE OF HIS ASTONISHING ORIGIN!

OUR STORY BEGINS YEARS AGO, IN THE OFFICES OF TRANS-NATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES...

...THE DUKE WAS MERELY ANOTHER PROGRAMMER LIVING A LIFE DICTATED BY THE COMPANY.

WORK.  
WORK.  
WORK.

BRILLIANT THOUGH HE WAS, THE ADMINISTRATION KNEW HE NEEDED A PARTNER TO FOCUS HIS WORK.

KID, SAY HELLO TO CYDNEY MARQUEZ, A HARDWARE ACE FROM THE COAST.

SHE'S GOING TO WORK WITH YOU ON YOUR NEUROTECH INTERFACE PROJECT.

UM...HI.

HER FUNCTIONAL DESIGN SENSE COMPLEMENTED AND REALIZED HIS THEORETICAL PROGRAMMING.

IN A FRENZY OF INSPIRATION, THEY SPENT EVERY WAKING HOUR IN THE LAB--

--UNWARE THEIR PASSION FOR THE WORK WAS BECOMING A PASSION FOR EACH OTHER.

TOGETHER THEY CREATED THE BASIS OF EVERY CYBERSPACE INTERFACE USED TODAY--

--A CHIP THAT TRANSLATED THE ELECTRONIC PULSE OF CYBERSPACE INTO DIRECT CEREBRAL STIMULATION.

PLAYING IN A CYBERSPACE MADE MORE SENSUOUSLY RESOLVED THANKS TO THEIR BREAKTHROUGH TECH--

--THEY FELL IN LOVE.





YOUNG, SUCCESSFUL, AND  
HOPELESSLY SMITTEN, THEIR LIFE  
TOGETHER SEEMED PERFECT...

HONEY, I'M  
HOME!

BABY, YOU'RE  
THE GREATEST!

...UNTIL THE DAY CYD  
VANISHED INTO THIN AIR..



THE DUKE WAS  
DEVASTATED.

SORRY, KID, IT LOOKS LIKE CYD WAS GRABBED BY A COMPETITOR IN A  
HEAD HUNTING RAID.



BUT I CAN'T  
LIVE WITHOUT  
HER.

GET OVER IT, SON. BE GLAD THEY DIDN'T  
GET YOU. NOW GO BACK TO WORK.

BUT THE LAB OFFERED NO SOLACE, ONLY THE  
CONSTANT REMINDER OF CYD'S ABSENCE.



DOGGEDLY SEARCHING THE NET, HE  
LOOKED FOR ANY CLUE TO HER  
WHEREABOUTS, BUT FOUND NOTHING.

**CYD!**

HE PLUNGED INTO A DEEP DEPRESSION, LOSING  
INTEREST IN WORK AND IN PERSONAL HYGIENE.



BELIEVING THE TRANS-NASH ADMIN  
DIDN'T WANT HIM TO FIND CYD--

--HE DECIDED TO LEAVE THE COMPANY,  
KNOWING HE HAD ONLY ONE MEANS OF  
BREAKING HIS LIFETIME CONTRACT--

--HIS OWN  
DEATH.



WITH A STYLISH DUPLICITY, HE ENGINEERED HIS OWN "DISAPPEARANCE"

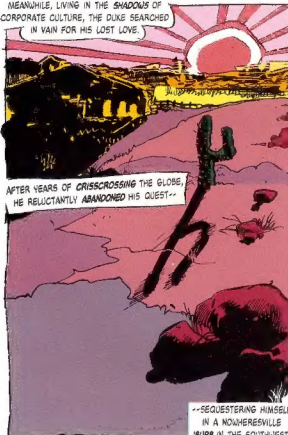
AT GREAT RISK AND COST, HE OBLITERATED  
ALL PHYSICAL AND ELECTRONIC EVIDENCE  
OF HIS CORPORATE EXISTENCE.



DELETE  
ALL

HIS MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT DEPARTURE SENT THE  
TRANS-NASH ADMIN INTO AN UPROAR.


MEANWHILE, LIVING IN THE SHADOWS OF  
CORPORATE CULTURE, THE DUKE SEARCHED  
IN VAIN FOR HIS LOST LOVE.



AFTER YEARS OF CRISSCROSSING THE GLOBE,  
HE RELUCTANTLY ABANDONED HIS QUEST--

--SEQUESTERING HIMSELF  
IN A NOWHERESVILLE  
'BURB IN THE SOUTHWEST.

DOOOH.  
IF I GET MY HANDS  
ON THAT NO- GOOD,  
UNGRATEFUL KID...



BEFORE THEY COULD FIND THE DUKE, THE COMPANY  
SUFFERED A HOSTILE TAKEOVER, ENDING THEIR PURSUIT.

RESIGNED TO A LIFE ALONE, HE  
THREW HIMSELF BACK INTO HIS  
NEUROTECH RESEARCH --

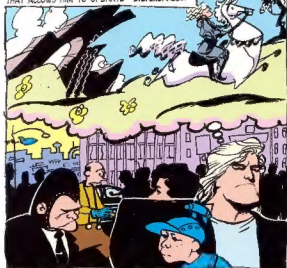
--EVENTUALLY GOING BEYOND  
THE WORK HE AND CYD HAD  
BEGUN AT TRANS-NASH.

NOW THERE ARE CERTAIN PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS ALL GLIDERS FACE--  
**BIG AND BAD** THEIR CYBERSPACE PROGRAM ARCHETYPES MAY BE.

BY PLUGGING INTO THE NET, A GLIDER SWITCHES OFF SENSORY INPUT FROM THE REAL WORLD--



IN HIS SELF IMPOSED EXILE, THE DUKE CREATED A NEUROTECH IMPLANT THAT ALLOWS HIM TO OPERATE **BICAMERALLY**.



HE CAN FUNCTION IN CYBERSPACE AND THE REAL WORLD **SIMULTANEOUSLY**.



AFTER DISCARDING HIS OLD LIFE AFTER CVD'S DISAPPEARANCE, HE FOUND A NEW ONE IN THE NET AS...



AND GOES INTO WHAT'S CALLED A CYBER TRANCE

INSTEAD OF LYING DEAD TO THE WORLD IN A C-TRANCE, HE MOVES FREELY IN THE MATERIAL WORLD--

--WHILE STILL GLIDING THROUGH THE CYBERSPACE ETHER.



HE'S LIKE A SPLIT PERSONALITY WORKING TWO JOBS AT THE SAME TIME.



...DUKE STRATOSPHERE!



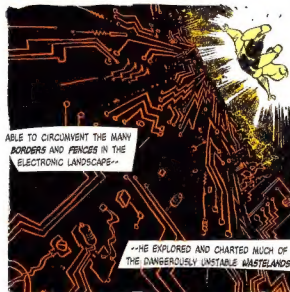
WORD OF THE DUKE'S EXPLOITS QUICKLY  
SPREAD ACROSS EVERY BOARD ON THE NET.

I'M SURE YOU'VE  
ACCESSED SOME OF  
THE STORIES...

AS AN OUTLAW HACKER HE RAIDED  
THE STARK-FUNKAWA COREPROG.



NO ONE KNOWS HOW MUCH OF THAT SYSTEM WAS  
COMPROMISED WHEN HE GHOSTED PAST THEIR DEFENSES.



ABLE TO CIRCUVENT THE MANY  
BORDERS AND FENCES IN THE  
ELECTRONIC LANDSCAPE--

--HE EXPLORED AND CHARTED MUCH OF  
THE DANGEROUSLY UNSTABLE WASTELANDS

INEVITABLY HE CROSSED PATHS  
WITH OTHER EDGE GLIDERS--



--SOME OF WHOM, LIKE THE VIRAL FEVER,  
REGARDED THE DUKE AS A THREAT.

WHEN THE FABRIC OF CYBERSPACE WAS THREATENED BY THE DOMINO CRASH--



--HE JOINED FORCES WITH SHIVA BLUE, DOT 33,  
BROKEN HAIKU, AND FIRELIGHT TO PREVENT THE  
TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THE NET.

HIS ONLY KNOWN DEFEAT  
CAME WHEN HE  
CRACKED THE  
CHROMOSOME VAULT--

--THE GORDIAN KNOT OF CYBERSPACE,  
SUPPOSEDLY IMPENETRABLE--



--AND RUMORED TO CONTAIN THE DNA SEQUENCES OF  
FOUR OF THE LAST CENTURY'S MOST POWERFUL BEINGS.

IT TOOK A FULL YEAR TO DECIPHER AND  
BREAK THE NOBIUS LOOP SECURITY CODES--



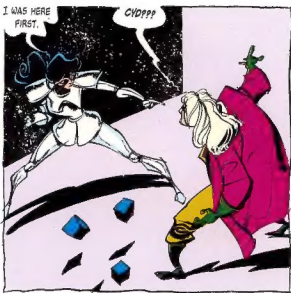
--BUT HE WAS DETERMINED TO BE THE FIRST TO SOLVE THIS CYBERSPACE PUZZLE.

HE WAS THE SECOND.

NOT SO FAST.

I WAS HERE FIRST.

CYD???



IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME, BABY.

I KIND OF FIGURED YOU WERE THE ENIGMATIC DUKE STRATOSPHERE.

I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD--OR WORSE.



SORRY ABOUT THAT. PART OF MY JOB.

ALCHEMAX WANTED YOUR RESEARCH, AND DECIDED TO PUT ME ON THE INSIDE INSTEAD OF TAKING YOU OUT.

YOU WORK FOR ALCHEMAX?

I FREELANCED FOR THEM. I'M A HIRED GUN.



THEN EVERYTHING WE HAD WAS A LIE?



NOT EVERYTHING, WHICH IS WHY IT'S HARD FOR ME TO DO THIS--

CAN'T LEAVE WITHOUT THIS DOUBLE HELIX DYNAMITE.



DON'T TAKE IT PERSONALLY. YOU'RE STILL THE GREATEST, BABY.



CVD'S RETURN WAS THE ONE THING THAT COULD THROW THE OTHERWISE IMPERTURABLE DUKE OFF TRACK.



HE GAVE CHASE, ANGRY, HUMILIATED, AND-- HE HATED HIMSELF FOR THIS--STILL IN LOVE.

BUT SHE BLUNDED HIM ONCE AGAIN.

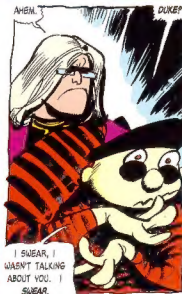


THE TRUTH IS THAT, IN SPITE OF HIS REPUTATION AS THE NET'S MOST DARING GLIDER--

--THE FLASHY, HEROIC ARCHETYPE CONCEALS A HEARTBROKEN MAN, COMPENSATING FOR THE LOSS OF...

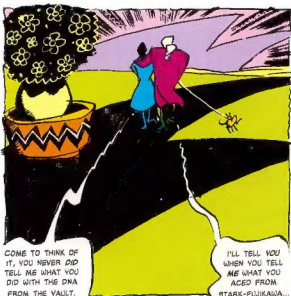
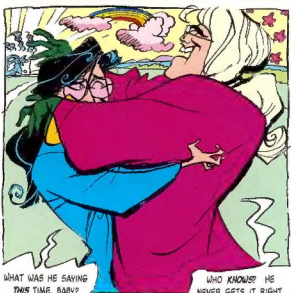
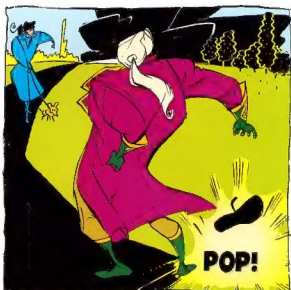


AHEM. DUKE?



BONGO, YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GO SHOOTING YOUR MOUTH OFF IN PUBLIC.





NOW  
PLAYING

# HAZZARD 2049

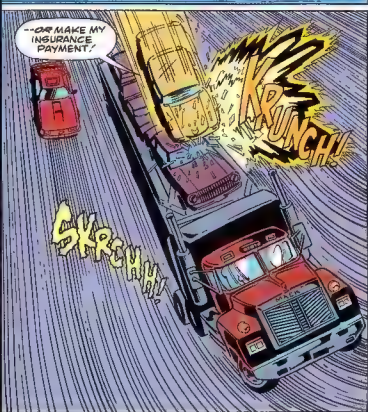
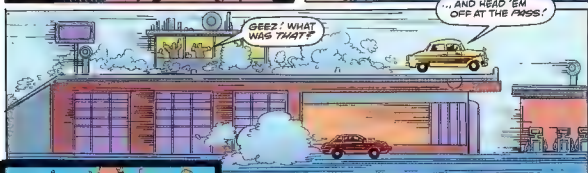
SCAN ITS SPECS, IT'S  
LIKE WE'RE BACK IN THE  
TWENTIETH  
CENTURY'S HMO!

BUT WHERE'S  
HAP? HE'S THE  
ONE WE CAME  
TO SEE.  
RIGHT?

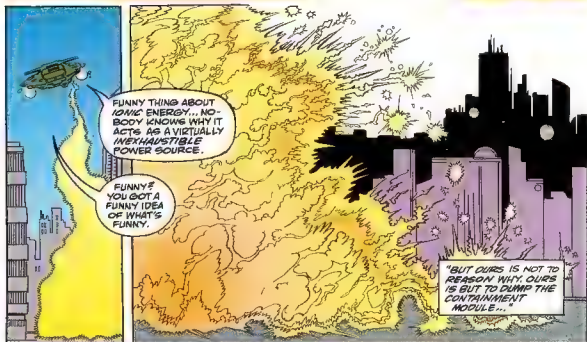
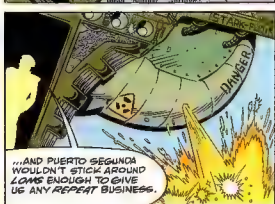
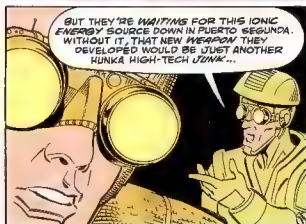
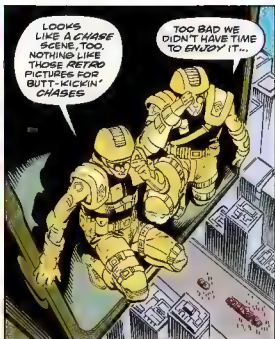
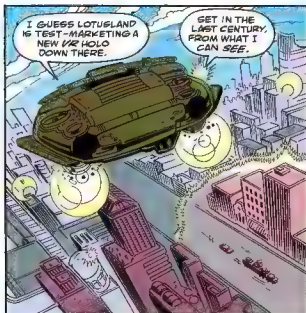
YEAH, WE  
WANT HAP--  
EVEN IF HE IS  
ONLY A VR  
CHARACTER!

SCREECH!

MICHAEL JAN FRIEDMAN WRITER  
BINO PECICCO PENCILER  
DON HUDSON INKER  
ROD COLLERENSHAW LETTERER  
ROBBIE BUSCH COLORIST  
JOEY CAVALIERI EDITOR  
TOM DeFALCO CHIEF







"AND GO HOME."

HERE I AM, SECONDS AWAY FROM BEING A GREASY SPOT ON THE ASPHALT...

FORTUNATELY, I MANAGE TO GRAB THE RELEASE LEVER-- JUST IN THE NICK OF TIME, WHATEVER A "NICK" IS.

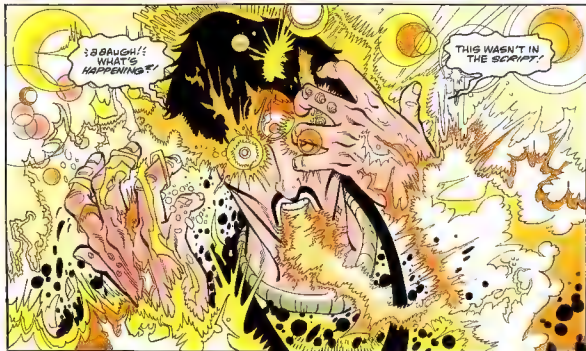
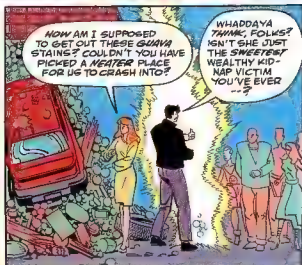
"THEREBY UNLEASHING THESE BABIES ONE BY ONE ON AN UNEXPECTED ROAD."

"WHICH IN TURN FORCES OUR DASTARDLY KIDNAPPER\* TYPES TO MAKE AN UNSCHEDULED PIT STOP!"

WASN'T THAT CLEVER OF ME? HUH, WASN'T IT?

HOW COME YOU'RE NOT AGREEING? I GUESS IT'S HARD TO TALK WHEN YOU'VE GOT AN AIRBAG HALFWAY DOWN YOUR THROAT.

APPLES \$2.99



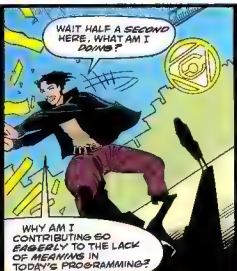


WOW...  
I FEEL  
DIFFERENT.  
LIKE I JUST  
CHANNELLED THE  
SPIRITS OF A  
BILLION  
FIREFLIES.



MAYBE IT'S LOVE.  
LET'S SAUNTER OFF INTO  
THE SUNSET, MISS. CAN  
I CALL YOU, MISS?

YOU CAN  
CALL ME A  
CAB. AND IF  
YOU DON'T  
GET YOUR  
HANDS OFF  
ME, I'LL  
SCREAM.



WAIT HALF A SECOND  
HERE. WHAT AM I  
DOING?

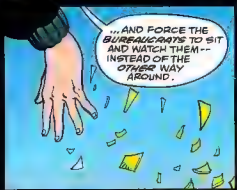
WHY AM I  
CONTRIBUTING SO  
EAGERLY TO THE LACK  
OF MEANING IN  
TODAY'S PROGRAMMING?



IF I WERE KING OF  
THE FOREST...



I'D LET THE PEOPLE  
MAKE THE VR FLICKS...



...AND FORCE THE  
BUREAUCRATS TO SIT  
AND WATCH THEM--  
INSTEAD OF THE  
OTHER WAY  
AROUND.



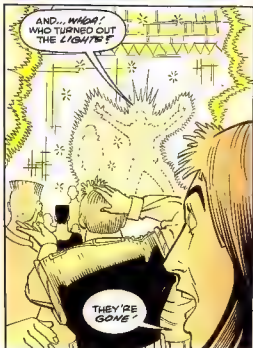
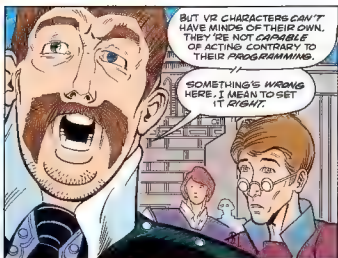
WHAT ARE WE, AFTER  
ALL... PUPPETS OF THE  
ESTABLISHMENT? MINDS  
GOOD FOR NOTHING  
BUT TO THINK WHAT  
THEY TELL US  
TO THINK?

HOW MANY HERE ARE  
WEARING THEIR CORPORATION'S  
LOGO ON THEIR UNDERWEAR?  
--SHOW OF HANDS!

TELL IT,  
HAP!

WAY TO  
GO, HAP!







I WANT AN INVESTIGATION OF WHAT HAPPENED HERE TODAY, AND NONE OF THE HIGHER UPS ARE TO HEAR ABOUT IT... OR I'LL BE RUINED IN THIS TOWN.



WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, HAVE THE VR FOOTAGE DESTROYED. BAD ENOUGH A SMALL CROWD SAW IT, IF IT EVER GOT INTO THE PIRATE DISTRIBUTION STREAM...

I'LL GET RIGHT ON IT, MISTER SARKISSIAN.

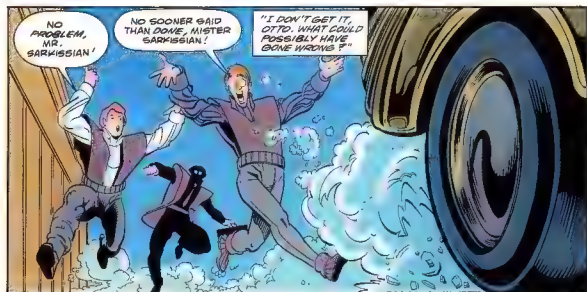


AND ANOTHER... WHAT?! A SCRATCH ON MY BRAND NEW DELAROSSA 9000? HOW DID THIS HAPPEN?



NEVER MIND. COULD ANYTHING ELSE GO WRONG TODAY? MAYBE A VOLCANIC ERUPTION? A TIDAL WAVE?

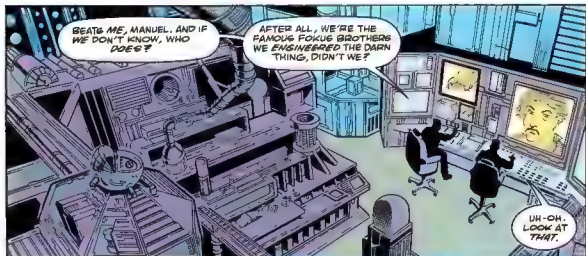
DON'T FORGET. I WANT THAT VR TAPE ANNIHILATED.



NO PROBLEM, MR. SARKISSIAN!

NO SOONER SAID THAN DONE, MISTER SARKISSIAN!

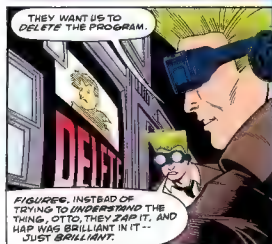
"I DON'T GET IT, OTTO. WHAT COULD POSSIBLY HAVE GONE WRONG?"



BEATS ME, MANUEL. AND IF WE DON'T KNOW, WHO DOES?

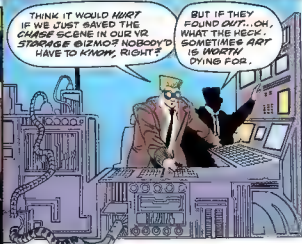
AFTER ALL, WE'RE THE FAMOUS FOKUS BROTHERS WE ENGINEERED THE DARN THING, DIDN'T WE?

UH-OH. LOOK AT THAT.



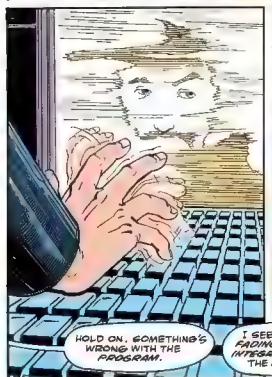
THEY WANT US TO DELETE THE PROGRAM.

FIGURES. INSTEAD OF TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE THING, OTTO, THEY ZAP IT, AND HAP WAS BRILLIANT IN IT -- JUST BRILLIANT.



THINK IT WOULD HURT IF WE JUST SAVED THE CHASE SCENE IN OUR VR STORAGE @IZMO? NOBODY'D HAVE TO KNOW, RIGHT?

BUT IF THEY FOUND OUT... OH, WHAT THE HECK. SOMETIMES ART IS WORTH DYING FOR.

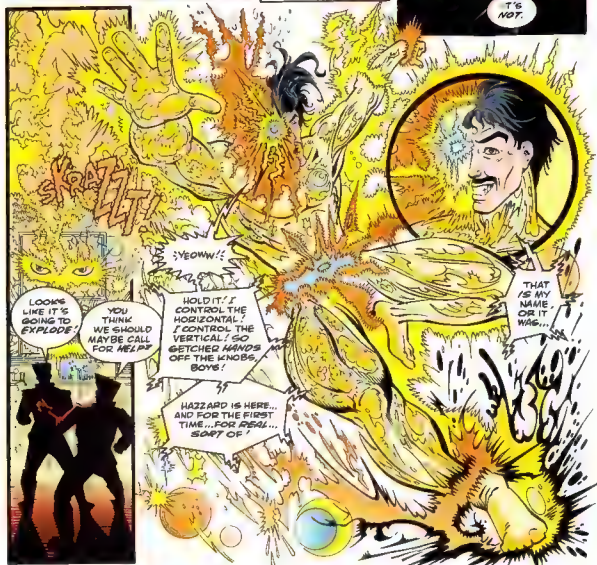


HOLD ON. SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH THE PROGRAM.

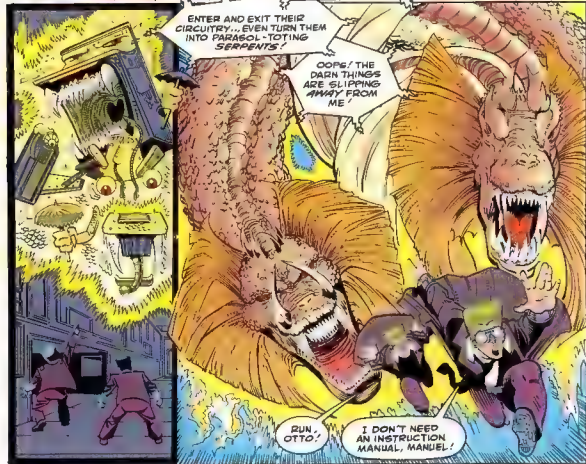
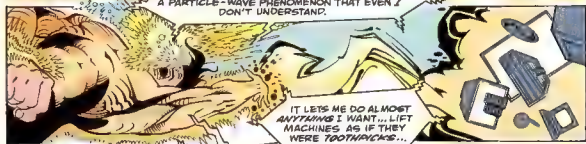
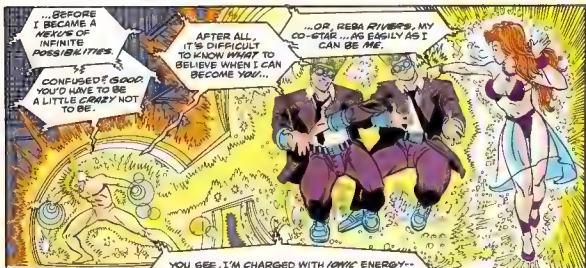


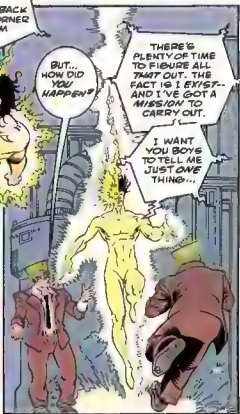
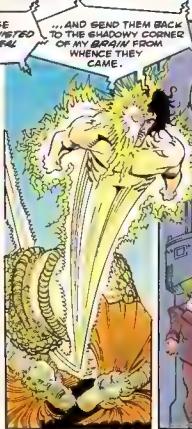
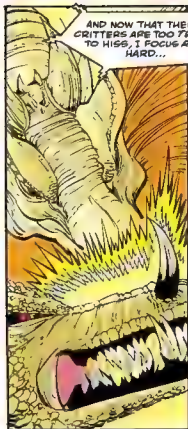
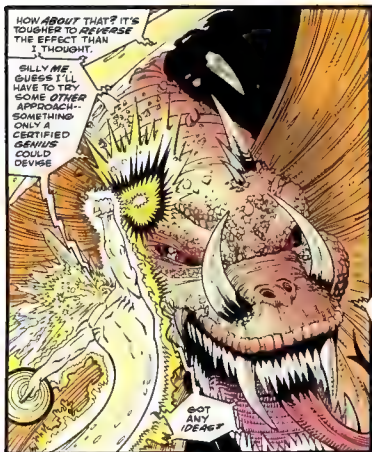
WE CAN'T JUST LET IT DIE! GET IT BACK ONLINE.

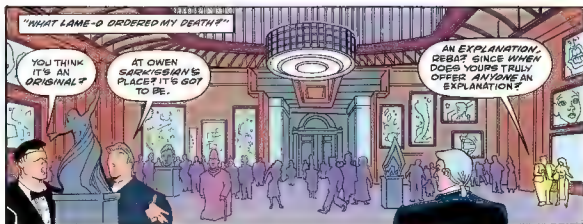
I SEE IT, MANUEL. IT'S FADING... LOSING ITS INTEGRITY. BUT WHY? WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH IT?











"WHAT LAME-O ORDERED MY DEATH?"

YOU THINK  
IT'S AN  
ORIGINAL?

AT OWEN  
SARKISSIAN'S  
PLACE? IT'S GOT  
TO BE.

AN EXPLANATION,  
REBA? SINCE WHEN  
DOES YOURS TRULY  
OFFER ANYONE AN  
EXPLANATION?

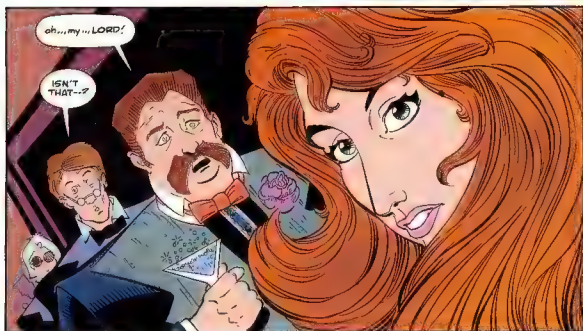
OWEN, HONEY... ONE DOESN'T  
JUST DUMP A REBA RIVERS VR FOR  
NO REASON AT ALL. MY PICKS  
ARE BOX OFFICE.

SO WHEN I HEARD THAT YOU'D  
SCRAPPED MY NEW RETRO  
PRODUCTION, I NATURALLY  
WONDERED WHY.

TRUST ME WHEN  
I TELL YOU THAT THE  
CORPORATION WOULD  
NOT HAVE BEEN PLEASED.  
AND IF STARK -  
FUJUKAWA ISN'T  
PLEASED, NEITHER  
OF US IS --

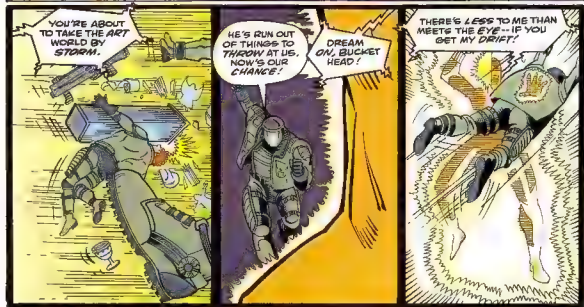
LISTEN, REBA,  
THERE WERE PROBLEMS  
WITH THAT PICTURE. BIG  
PROBLEMS ALL  
RIGHT?

OH, COME ON, OWEN -  
HONEY, TELL HER THE  
REAL REASON.

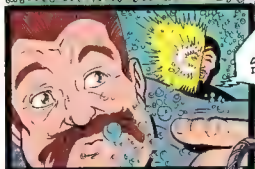


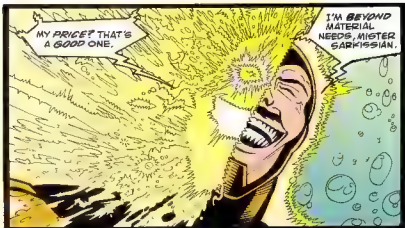
oh... my... LORD!

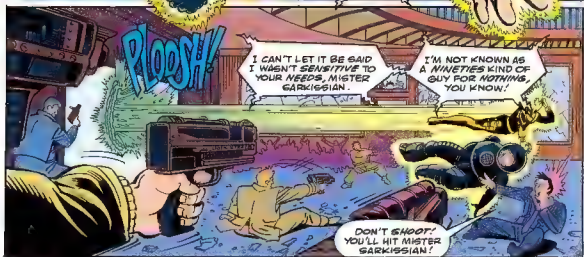
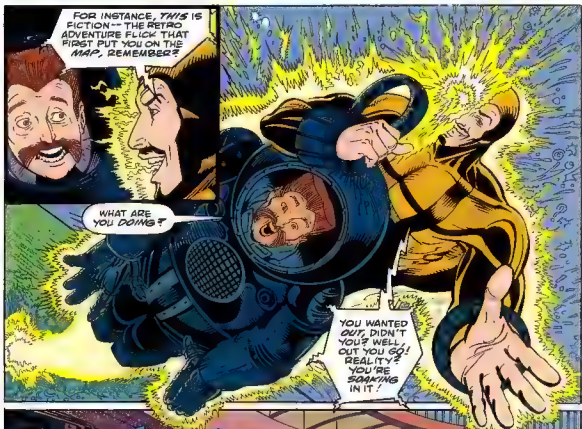
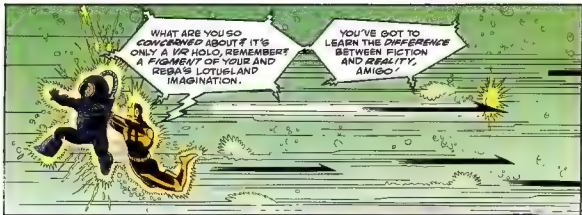
ISN'T  
THAT--?

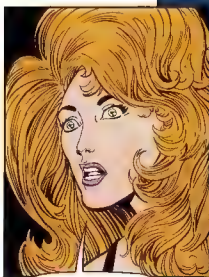








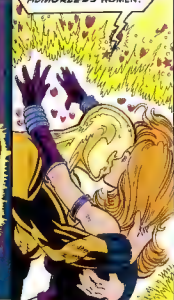
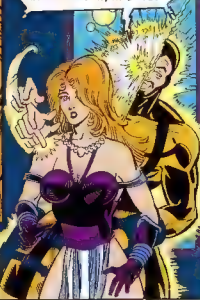




--OR A CORPORATE LOGO?  
BY THE WAY, IT'S JUST  
HAZZARD NOW, MY LOVE.

WHAT CAN I SAY?  
I'VE GOT A THING FOR  
HUMORLESS WOMEN!

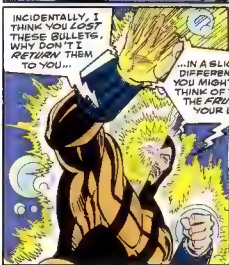
WAIT A MINUTE...  
THAT'S HAP HAZZARD!  
BUT...HE'S NO MORE  
REAL THAN A  
CARTOON CHARACTER!



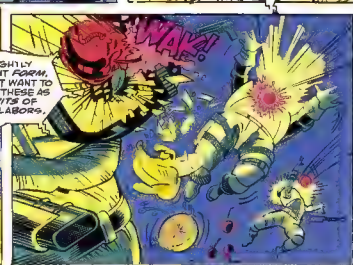
FORGET THE  
BIMBO. JUST  
SHOOT!



HOW CHIVALROUS  
OF YOU, OWEN-BABY.  
I RESPECT A MAN  
WHO CARES NOTHING  
ABOUT THE WELFARE  
OF THE FAIRER  
SEX.

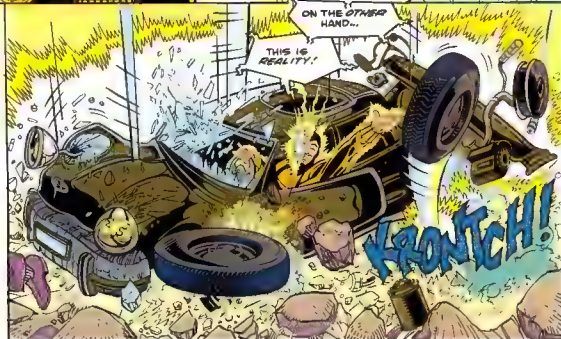
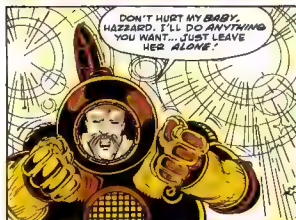
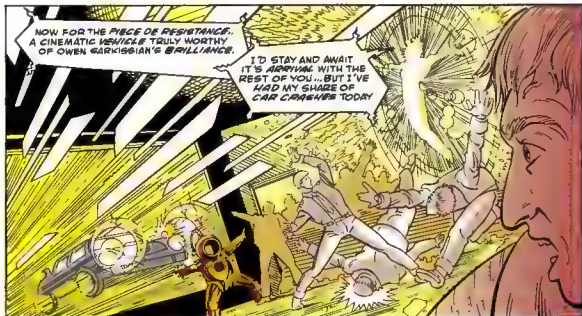


INCIDENTALLY, I  
THINK YOU LOST  
THESE BULLETS.  
WHY DON'T I  
RETURN THEM  
TO YOU...



...IN A SLIGHTLY  
DIFFERENT FORM,  
YOU MIGHT WANT TO  
THINK OF THESE AS  
THE FRUITS OF  
YOUR LABORS.







# UNLIMITED

JOEY CAVALIERI — Editor

LIA PELOSI — Assistant Editor

ALL LETTERS FOR PUBLICATION MUST INCLUDE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS, ALTHOUGH WE WILL GLADLY WITHHOLD THAT INFORMATION UPON REQUEST.

## Out Of My Head

### WHY WE LOVE KYLE

Kyle's in town. Mort found him and brought him by. "You wanted a cover from me?" asked Kyle.

Quickly, I agreed. "Yeah, something with Hulk 2099 and Duke Stratosphere."

"Just standing there? Can't they fight?"

"They don't fight."

"Well, who can the Hulk fight?"

"The issue's villain." I showed him a picture of Vulx.

"Can either of these guys shoot rays out of their eyes?"

"No. The Hulk's got a big tongue, but he doesn't shoot rays."

"Are you sure? Can they throw boulders at each other?"

"A boulder is good. I'll put the logo on it!"

"Great! What's the guy look like?"

"The Hulk? Kyle, you drew him in issue #21!"

"Can we get a woman screaming on this cover?"

"Yeah, that's good for 50,000 more sales. How 'bout Quirk?"

"Who's that?"

"Kyle, you drew her in issue #21!"

"Can she shoot rays from her eyes?"

"Kyle..."

"Can we have the background on fire for no apparent reason?"

"Kyle..."

"How about another cover of just the Hulk?"

"Great!"

"Can he be busting through a wall?"

"A wall is good."

Mort laughs. "This is high concept?"

At this point, we're so loud, other office doors slam shut.

"You'll have the cover Friday!"

I should worry? Even if he's late, I can use it on the Hulk's new mag.

Unless he's shooting rays from his eyes.

Dear Joey and Matt,

This is about the "rules" that ran in your "Out Of My Head" column in THE PUNISHER 2099 #8, RAVAGE 2099 #11 and SPIDEY 2099 #12. Before I tell you the problems I had with them, let me give you a little background. I'm 28, received a degree in science education and taught high school science for four years to students ranging in ability from those who could barely read to those at the top of their class. I worked at a bookstore for two years. Finally, for fifteen years, I've read comics, played role-playing games and read all kinds of books. For these reasons, I always try to get people

to be open-minded when it comes to entertainment reading.

The first problem I had with your Rules was your claim that you went into the "science fiction section." I've never heard of any bookstore that even tries to separate sf from fantasy. Even moreso, I have to say that anyone who only checks out a single section of books is doing themselves a great disservice. There are plenty of books out there that fit into different categories such as sf, mysteries and horror. By just looking in one section, you'll miss these! If you try another section, you might find that you like that genre also!

So when you look at two sections that overlap as much as fantasy and sf, you should quickly realize that it's nearly impossible for us to separate them.

Rules 4 & 5 took me by surprise. I couldn't believe anyone who works in comics (the king of all sequel makers) would suggest a story be told in one installment! As long as an author continues to explore different facets of the character, let them. It's like visiting old and dear friends.

As for rule 6, I find it ironic that I've had several discussions over the years with comics as the focus. People claimed that comics were merely a waste of time better spent reading real books. My answer's always been the same: that if you're reading for your own pleasure, reading what you like is never a waste. If you read what you like, you will like to read and you will read more. After dealing with as many students as I did (who told me, "I don't like to read"), you learn that getting students to read should be a primary goal of all teachers.

I also have to disagree with your thinking on rule 8. Everyone does not know how all classical tales, Shakespeare's plays, myths and fairy tales end. If you do know, big deal! If it's a classic, it deserves to be retold. If an author rewrites one of these as an sf novel, it should have twists and turns that you don't know about. So give it a chance.

So here are the New Rules:

1) Look at all of the sections in a bookstore. If it looks good, try it. Don't worry about the so-called classification.

2) Ignore the best-seller lists. Make up your own mind.

3) Ignore authors on talk shows. Make up your own mind.

4) It doesn't matter what you read, as long as you read.

5) Don't try to limit what other people read.

David Caldwell  
Route 1, Box 1688  
Clyde, NC 28721

You bring up some valid rebuttals to Joey's snotty remarks, Dave, but where did you get the idea that Joey or anybody else up here frequents only one section of the bookstore? You oughta see Joey's place: it makes the

Library at Alexandria look like a garage sale. The whole point of rule 6 was to "at least consider" shopping somewhere else in the store, remember?

That said, while your plea for letting people read what they want is welcome, generous, good-spirited and well-intentioned, the rules were brought about in the first place because Joey couldn't get what he wanted at the bookstore: original, thought-provoking, contemporary, self-contained, more rigidly-structured sf of the kind he prefers...because it's being crowded off the rack by the other stuff!

For more on this debate, there's a fine essay in the November '93 issue of *Science Fiction Age*. Scope it out if you can still find a copy.

Dear Unlimited Men,

Let me compliment you on one of the most ingenious creations in mainstream comics to come around in a long time, namely the 2099 Universe.

In front of me I hold issue #3 of 2099 UNLIMITED and I am somewhat bemused. Let me tell you why. First off I think that the Hulk has proven successful enough for his own limited series. You premied him here; let's see something new. Get Spider-Man out of the book. I like the idea of different creative teams handling characters who have their own titles. Put Doom, Ravage or the Punisher in, or maybe even X'an or Bloodhawk of the X-Men 2099.

As for the new frontiers offered by R-Gang and the Kid Current strips, I'm somewhat ambivalent. I like new things but sometimes they can be hard to swallow. Kid Current deserves his own one-shot. I like the idea of showing the world of 2099 and not just the super hero portion. Another idea for the third space in the mag would be Punisher Armory 2099 or Secrets of Doom's Armor.

A frightening thing came to my attention the other day. You said you were thinking of a 2099/present-day crossover: I say they nay, nay NAY! To do so would upset the uniqueness of the 2099 universe and make it just a foolish extension of Marvel continuity. I'm already upset over Spider-Man 2099's appearance in THOR CORPS and Darkhawk's sojourn into 2099. It's like the temptation to crossover the Marvel Universe with the New Universe. Such a thing upsets the singularity of an event, mucking with the genius of an idea. If 2099 needs the Marvel Universe to survive, I'd rather see it die a dignified death than become fouled up.

Phillip Spencer  
5133 Muskiet Rd.  
Wheat, CA 96094

**We don't have to do a 2099/present-day crossover to survive, Phil, but we sure get mail clamoring for it. If you agree or not, make your voice heard! By the way, if we do give a new character a one-shot, would you get over your ambivalence long enough to support it? Let us know!**

To the UNLIMITED team,

Great work from all the people in 2099! Fantastic and wonderful on the Hulk 2099! The way it followed the "Fall of the Hammer" in issue #3 was pretty excellent!

I think the Hulk should stay in the UNLIMITED book for now. He needs to be developed more. In this book you can do that and more.

As far as that poll someone mentioned in last issue's letters page, here are my choices.

- 1) Best Character—Spider-Man 2099. He was the first and best!
- 2) Best Costume—Doom 2099. His armor is more advanced and more cool than his original.
- 3) Best Villain—Vulture 2099. Crazy and deranged, the way it should be.
- 4) Best Supporting Character—Wine. The cyberspace rider is great in all ways.
- 5) Most Changed Character—Ravage 2099. From man to beast, how much more changed can you get?
- 6) Best Issue—X-MEN 2099 #1. A great debut for a new team.
- 7) Best Storyline—DOOM 2099 #1-4. He takes his country back and now the world.
- 8) Best Death—Vulture 2099. Who knows for sure if he's really dead, but it was great.

Bert Tully  
33-3362 62nd St.  
Jackson Heights, NY 11372

**9) Best Fans—2099 fans!**  
Well, Bert, we agree that the Hulk 2099 needs to be developed more; we just disagree on how to do it! See the news elsewhere!

Dear Joey and Mitt,

I love the 2099 Universe. I collect the following: RAVAGE 2099, DOOM 2099, PUNISHER 2099, SPIDER-MAN 2099 and the 2099 UNLIMITED. UNLIMITED #3 was spectacular! Your Hulk is very smart; he showed it in "Water God" on pages 22-23.

John Eisenhart is a great Hulk. He's much better and cooler than the original version. Give this Hulk some new villains that are as savage and intelligent as he can be! I have the first part of the crossover. Thor 2099 is real cool! He and Spidey 2099 had a totally outrageous battle. I can't wait for the rest!

(Name & address withheld by request)

**One villain as savage and intelligent as the Hulk coming up! Check out the Next Issue box!**

Dear UNLIMITED,

I love all the 2099 titles! Especially X-MEN 2099, SPIDER-MAN 2099 and 2099 UNLIMITED! The art is spectacular! I'd like to see a limited series of the Hulk 2099. I like the Hulk stories more than the Spidey stories but, hey, that's me. Until Hulk 2099 gets a mohawk on his

back, make mine Marvel 2099!

Arthur Bond  
4615 Labrador Lane  
Locksville, MD 21030

**Gee, we thought that was a mohawk on his back!**

Dear Joey,

Okay, I'll admit it, I'm a 2099 addict! I've purchased and read every issue of every title. Marvel has achieved what it failed to do previously; it has built a wonderful new universe separate from the present one.

I'm begging you to keep it separate. Having some manner of time travel story would shatter the illusion of this being the real future of the Marvel Universe.

My favorite aspect of 2099 is the way Thor has cast his godlike influence on it. The whole idea of the Thorites just seems natural. I am also impressed by the 2099 cyberspace. Surely explorations into such a special realm should be kept to short, inspired trips such as "Kid Current On-Line." If you could come up with a credible Cyber-Thor, now that would be a winner. Thanks for listening.

Bill Hall  
556 Main St.  
Cromwell, CT 06416

**It's no illusion, Bill. This is the future of the Marvel Universe. We're not exactly sure that a time travel story would change that, but your "no" vote on the 2099/present-day crossover is acknowledged. What do the rest of you think? Vote now!**

Dear 2099 UNLIMITED,

You guys have created a very interesting character with the Hulk 2099. Aside from the name he really has no direct connection with the present-day Hulk at all! He is a totally new character: It's easy to see why he appears so fearsome on the outside, he lives in a very dark world and has to adjust to it in his own way.

Now as to the question of whether or not the world of 2099 is a dark and desolate world, well there is no question that it is. Comic books have always looked at society from many different viewpoints. It seems that when you first started writing down some ideas of what the world might be like in a century's time you appeared to take the dark ends of it such as pollution, nuclear accidents, the destruction of the ozone layer and other modern day problems. Then pictured what the world would be like if these problems were not solved. The result is the dehumanized world that we see in 2099. Do any of us really want to live in such a world? I think not!

Now here's the \$64,000 question: will the Hulk 2099 ever meet the present day Hulk? If so, would they become friends or bitter rivals? It's certainly worth considering for future issues. Thanks for reading.

Robert Moraes  
33 Cofax Dr.  
Pequanock, NJ 07440

**A Hulk/Hulk 2099 crossover? Hmm...**

Dear UNLIMITED,

I think the new 2099 series is great! It gives us a look into the future and its heroes. Of all the 2099 heroes I think

Spider-Man 2099 is the best. The idea of having the 2099 UNLIMITED is fantastic. Now we can see all of the heroes of the future without giving them each their own series. Everybody asks for a different hero with their own series but with the UNLIMITED you can satisfy everyone!

Andrew Long  
2119 Lime Blossom  
San Antonio, TX 78247

**Our thoughts exactly, Andrew.**

Dear UNLIMITED,

I'm writing to answer your question about giving the Hulk 2099 his own title. I say YES! However, since 2099 UNLIMITED is a melting pot for new ideas in the 2099 Universe, I would also say that he belongs here. Perhaps if you find another idea that you want to experiment with without committing it to a new monthly title, you can give that big green heathen his own title and let the other idea take his place in the UNLIMITED world. But either way I like the Hulk. But, uh, could you remove the spike things from his tongue? They're kind of gross.

I would also like to see more of other characters from the other 2099 titles. So far other than a couple of off-the-wall stories, the only characters have been the Hulk and Spider-Man 2099.

In parting I would like to say that all the people who worked on the UNLIMITED and the other 2099 titles have done a great job. I congratulate you.

Michael Payne  
74 Box 515  
Graham, TX 76450

**Replace the Hulk? Guess we will need something... what do you guys suggest?**

## SO MUCH MORE OF MARVEL 2099 WE CAN HARDLY STAND IT OURSELVES

If you've picked up any other 2099 mag this month, you've read the news in this box...we're gettin' ready to do a HULK 2099 ongoing series!

The only reason we're confident enough to do so is due solely to your response! You've been so enthusiastic toward the character and the idea of a new 2099, that we're forging ahead!

Again, our sincere thanks!

## NEXT ISSUE

Hey! Just because we're givin' the Chartruce Crusader (yeech! Those nicknames stink, don't they?) his own mag, it doesn't mean you can expect his departure from these pages just yet! Besides, there's no law sayin' he can't be both places at once, right? Spidey 2099 did it!

So, be with us when the Verdant Vanquisher (yeech! See what we mean?) meets the Golden One! Also, two new 2099 concepts! Are we big-hearted or what?



# UNLIMITED EXTRA

**ITEM!** Welp, here we are again, just three short months after we left you! Did you miss us?

**ITEM!** Look! Another gratuitous caricature of the 2099 group editor and mayor of Toontown! This one was done on a Christmas card by World's Greatest Intern, **Chia-Chi Wang!** True to our promise, we did make **Chi** a character in the 2099 universe! We're just not revealing exactly where yet!



**ITEM!** So, by now you've read the news, and you know that we're putting **THE HULK 2099** in his own mag! **Gerry Jones** is continuing his fine stint as chief scribe of the Great Green One's mighty misadventures! So where does that leave this mag, you ask?

We're continuing to feature our colossal sensation in 2099 **UNLIMITED**, for the time being. But you know us...we hate for any line-up to remain the same for too long! So if you have a suggestion for a feature that should appear here: a supporting cast member you're dying to see more of, or a new character or villain from any of our other 2099 mags that you think would make a great solo feature, now's the time to let us know!

We've got a few surprises and some concepts we genuinely feel will take your breath away...but why rely on guesswork when we can hear what you want directly from you? There's no better time to make a mark on the 2099 universe...so don't put it off...write today! You know where to find us!

**ITEM!** Speaking of "where to find us," let's repeat our request from last ish...if any of you fans are on-line somewhere out in the uncharted wilds of cyberspace, please write and let us know! We're dying with curiosity to how many of you guys are talking to each other (and the occasional pros who pop up now and then on the net) about our mags and nearly everything else! So drop us a line (the usual slow way; we don't have an e-mail address...yet!) and let us know! Don't let us send **Woe** looking for you!

**ITEM!** Now that we've learned to spell "Edginton" and "Ollersenshaw," we can safely

introduce the artists and writers for this issue!

**Kyle Baker**, super genius, is currently working on a project for a brand new line of Marvel Comics: a comic called **BREAK THE CHAIN**, which will be polybagged with a cassette by **KRS-One**. We were glad to snag **Kyle** briefly for this solo appearance of Duke Stratosphere! **John Francis Moore**, currently masterminding our **DOOM** and **X-MEN** 2099 titles, had a lot of fun working with him and revisiting cyberspace!

**Michael Jan Friedman** shares something in common with **SPIDEY 2099** writer **Peter David**. They're both authors of highly-successful *Star Trek* novels. **Mike's** story on **Hazzard 2099** marks his debut to these pages, but he'll be back next ish, with one or possibly two tales, one of which centering around yet another brand new concept! We don't give anybody a rest around here!

This may also be the first published work of **Gino DeCicco**, who's a student at the School of Visual Arts. **Gino** takes classes taught by **Walt Simonson** and **Klaus Janson**. Well, you wanted to know how to break into comics...

**ITEM!** You guys have been great about offering us suggestions and advice concerning the major events in 2099 history. Whether it was helping us during the crossover, or coming up with cool suggestions for spin-offs, we've practically come to rely on our readers as a resource when a major crossroads looms on the horizon.

With that in mind, consider: the magic number is 25! We've got an anniversary coming up, and we want your input in making it a particularly special one! We've been tossing around a couple of ideas amongst ourselves, ones which are guaranteed to grab you, if we get 'em just right...but we want to hear from you. What do you think will make for a cool celebration issue of the mags that are about to hit their twenty-fifth issue? Don't spare us in the parts and labor department. Even if you think the idea's impossible, shoot the moon! We're just as curious about what you come up with...as you are about what we'll finally do!

Or words to that effect!

**ITEM!** On the subject, we really wanna know how much you're enjoying the new characters and concepts we spotlight in this mag. So if you want to see a particular character again, say if **Metalscream** or **Lachyma** or **Kid Current** were some of the coolest things you've ever seen, don't be shy about asking to see 'em again! Clear?

**NON-ITEM!** All right, look, we gotta bust outa here, but 'til we meet again three months from now, remember the new unofficial slogan as brainstormed by persistent assistant editor **Lila "Anger is an Energy" Pelosi**... "Yeah, Right."

